

# TUNNEL OPENED TO TRUCKS, VANS 1920 FIRST HOME

MARTINEZ, Dec. 14.—Repairs to the inter-county tunnel between Alameda and Contra Costa counties will be completed today, and after that time all traffic can be accommodated over the Tunnel Road, County Engineer R. R. Arnold announced today. The tunnel has been closed to big trucks and moving vans for the past ten days while repairs to the roof of the tunnel were being made.

According to Engineer Arnold the tunnel will undoubtedly have to be concreted next year. Alameda county has already announced that an appropriation of \$30,000 will be made in next year's budget for concreting the Alameda end of the tunnel.

The Franklin Canyon highway is to be closed to all traffic, according to Arnold, until it has been completed. He claims motorists have broken down barricades and have hindered contractors. If fair weather prevails, Arnold says, the highway will be completed in days.

# HIGHWAY TUNNEL CALLED UNSAFE

1925

MARTINEZ, Feb. 21. — County Surveyor R. R. Arnold today issued a warning to motorists and other traffic against use of the tunnel on the highway between Contra Costa and Alameda counties. A sign, "Dangerous but Passable" has been placed at the entrance of the bore.

Arnold's warning followed an inspection that showed many of the timbers holding up the tunnel roof are showing signs of rot and weakening. Seepage of water onto the timbers is blamed.

About eighteen months ago a portion of the tunnel roof fell, closing the road to traffic for several days.

Arnold will have a gang of men at work next week replacing the weakened timbers.

# OFFICIALS IN TUNNEL ROAD CLOSING CLASH

TRIB B MAR 11 1934

## Contra Costa Engineer Would Open Tube Wednesday but Oakland Man Says No

The 18-year-old Alameda-Contra Costa County tunnel "is more or less dangerous all the time, and persons using it do so at their own risk," R. R. Arnold, Contra Costa County engineer, declared last night.

The tunnel was ordered temporarily closed by Arnold and City Engineer Walter Frickstad of Oakland yesterday morning, after three heavy ceiling timbers fell.

But Arnold and Frickstad did not agree last night on the date of the probable opening of the tunnel.

Arnold said he would order it opened probably Wednesday night, after the fallen timbers are replaced. He added that Contra Costa County will not attempt "needed re-timbering throughout the bore because the county can not afford it."

### TUNNEL TO STAY CLOSED

But Frickstad said he will not permit the Oakland portal of the tunnel to be opened to East-bound traffic until the tunnel is made safe. He said that the timbering on the Contra Costa County portion of the tunnel is not sound.

Frickstad explained he could not say what work would have to be done to make the tunnel on the Contra Costa County side safe, other than that considerable new timbering was needed.

Arnold agreed that the whole length of the 614 feet of bore in his jurisdiction needs re-timbering, explaining that it is in "bad shape." He said that the 436 feet of tunnel in Oakland is in "pretty good shape."

"But it would take all summer to fix the tunnel properly, and we haven't the money to do it," Arnold added. "I've had signs put up warning persons that they use the tunnel at their own risk, and now I'm going to have larger signs put up."

The Fish Ranch Road is being used by all motorists during the delay, while the fallen timbers are being replaced. It has been closed for work in recent weeks and is not in good shape, Frickstad said. Arnold said the Fish Ranch Road was open only for traffic under five tons.

Frickstad's order barring traffic from Oakland to Contra Costa County through the tunnel until it is made safe was taken as an indication that the Fish Ranch Road will be the only route available for east-bound traffic for some time.

Timbers in the Alameda County side of the tunnel were inspected by engineers several weeks ago and were all found sound, Frickstad reported. Both engineers agreed that maintenance of the Oakland portion was easier than taking care of the Contra Costa County side, for underground springs cause water to flow over the timbering on the east side.

side.

## NO COST ESTIMATE

Arnold said he had made no estimate of the cost of re-timbering all of the portion of the tunnel under his jurisdiction. He declared, however, that the cost of such work might approach the original cost of the tunnel, \$46,000.

W. J. Buchanan of Pittsburg, chairman of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, said that financial provision for repair of the tunnel might be made in the new county budget, to be drawn up after July 1. Arnold reported to him, he said, that the present installation of timbers was only temporary, but would afford "adequate protection for motorists."

Workmen were to begin the work of replacing the fallen timbers this morning, under the direction of Arnold. An inspection of the general condition of the tunnel also was to be made by L. H. Taylor, superintendent of maintenance under Frickstad.

# REPAIRS ON TUNNEL WILL TAKE WEEK

TRIB D ~~MAR~~ 12 1934

## Number of Arches to Be Replaced Is Increased and Opening Date Delayed

To make absolutely certain that the eastern end of the Alameda-Contra Costa County Tunnel is safe before it is reopened to traffic, the number of arches to be replaced has been increased and the tunnel will probably not be opened for a week.

This was announced today by R. R. Arnold, Contra Costa County engineer, who said a crew of 15 men went to work yesterday re-timbering the tunnel where a small cave-in occurred Saturday.

Arnold originally estimated the tunnel could be reopened on Wednesday, and that seven "arches" of 16 by 16 timbers would be sufficient to repair the damage. Today, however, he said that nine to 12 "arches" would be replaced and that the repairs would take a week.

Change in Arnold's estimates came after Walter N. Frickstad, Oakland city engineer, declared he would not permit the Oakland portal of the tunnel to be opened until he had made absolutely certain that the bore is safe. The condition of the Contra Costa half of the tunnel is poorer than that of the Alameda half, because timbers have been rotted away by dripping spring water in the eastern end, engineers explained. No repairs will be necessary on the Alameda County side, according to Frickstad.



## PASS THE HAT Just to show

the difference between the modern way of doing things as compared to the more pioneer methods in the Eastbay, we are now building a magnificent \$4,000,000 Broadway Tunnel into Contra Costa County, with considerable financial assistance from the Federal Government. But the famous old tunnel was built partially by Oakland, partially by Contra Costa County and largely by passing the hat around.

This was brought out by Herb Graham of the Civil Service Board in reminiscing about the methods of financing the old tunnel which has been used for so many years by the Eastbay. It seems that it is about 900 feet long, of which 300 feet were in Oakland. Oakland was able to finance the construction of 300 feet of the tunnel, but Contra Costa was having some sort of financial difficulties at that time and found it impossible to build the other 600 feet. Now, Oakland was in great need of access to Contra Costa County and the interior, so the Merchants' Exchange and some other institutions started a collection which not only was able to build most of the center of the tunnel but also had \$300 left when it was all completed.

The holders of the collection were the late Wilbur Walker and the late William Knowles, according to Graham, who did some of the field work, and the \$300 surplus gradually grew into \$900 which was finally spent upon the triangular garden and the flagpole now at the western end of the tunnel.

Statisticians are trying to figure how many hats would have to be passed around in Oakland to raise the \$4,000,000 in loose change to build the new tunnel if that method were used now.

—THE KNAVE

# CREWS DIG FRANTICALLY TO SAVE MAN

NOV 5 - 1936

Collapse of a portion of the old tunnel linking Alameda and Contra Costa counties this afternoon trapped three workmen, two of whom were rescued by their fellows.

Tons of earth buried the other and rescue crews feared their frantic efforts to release him alive would be futile unless he had found sanctuary under a truck buried by the slide.

The man trapped, one of 11 doing repair work on the tunnel, was identified by his employers as Garnet Nichols, 39, of 639 Apgar Street.

R. A. West, 49, of 2125 Ninth Street, Berkeley, was one of the two men rescued. The name of the other was not learned.

West suffered cuts about the body and possible leg fractures when the tumbling earth and rock pinned him to the tunnel floor. Matt Salo, 57, of 2516 California Street, Berkeley, the crew boss, rescued West.

Oakland Street Department employees and maintenance men from the new Broadway Low Level tunnel rushed to the scene in an attempt to dig out the trapped man. They were forced to delay the digging, however, until they could timber the roof where the cave-in started.

Mrs. Nichols, wife of the trapped man, was taken to the scene by friends. They have two children.

The cave-in occurred 100 feet from the eastern portal of the old tunnel, which has been closed to traffic since early this year. About 10 feet of the tunnel roof was carried away, filling the tunnel within three feet of the top.

Six miners, four helpers and a truck driver were working at the scene. Those on scaffolding, who were removing old timbers preparatory to installing new ones, jumped and escaped.

Nichols apparently was caught in the middle of the slide. West and the other man rescued made their way a considerable distance before they were knocked down and partially buried.

The re-timbering work, begun three weeks ago by A. Soda and Son, contractors, was virtually completed. Workers said the timber set removed when the slide occurred was the last or next to last to be done.

The tunnel was closed early this year because the timbering was declared inadequate.

# FATAL CAVE-IN SCENE PAINTED BY REPORTER

News Gatherer Has to Crawl  
Through Clogged Bore to  
Get Story of Disaster

TRIB D NOV 6 1935

By FRED. J. MONTEAGLE

I crawled over the top of the shifting 200-ton "muck pile" in the old Alameda-Contra Costa County tunnel under which one may lay dead, to talk to Matt Salo, shift boss and hero of the cave-in disaster, who saved the life of one worker.

It was about 3:20 p. m. when I started into the murky 1050-foot tunnel that pierces the coast range foothills. Hardly three-quarters of an hour before, while a crew of 11 men was replacing timber in the bore, a "run" had started in the crown which they could not hold. Three men had been trapped as tons of earth roared down. Two had escaped.

Together with E. A. (Doc) Rogers, Tribune cameraman and veteran of many mine and tunnel disasters, I walked in from the west portal. With us was Patrolman Eugene Cleu. He had the name of Garnet Nichols—the man, whose broken body, volunteer union rescue crews were to carry from the tunnel some seven hours later.

## SHOUTING OF MEN

From out of the haze, pierced by the dull glow of electric lights in the roof of the tunnel came the sound of heavy timber thudding against timber and the shouts of men.

We were at the muck pile!

Already the preparatory work of installing "square sets" or new timbering to hold the "heavy ground" had begun. It was a prelude to the more frantic digging that was to start later. Rogers

"shot" those scenes. The figures of the men were illuminated in grotesque profile as the blinding light from his "flash bulbs" cut the darkness.

I crawled over the top of the muck pile. It was three feet there to the crown of the tunnel with that relentless force of a whole mountain pressing down on the jagged, untimbered hole. I was glad to scramble down the east side of the pile.



## THE BOSS' STORY

Here was a duplicate of the scene on the other side. Someone pointed out Matt Salo, the shift boss.

"She came all at once," this big, raw-boned man in overalls said. "We couldn't hold her." He spoke in a thick dialect.

"I pulled one fellow out—caught to the hips," he continued, gesturing to the far side of the "muck pile" that bulked huge in the semi-darkness. "Timbers and dirt knocked him down as he jumped from the 'jumbo.' He was lucky. I hope Nichols is." He picked up a heavy 12x12 and carried it to the power saw. The saving of West, now in the hospital, was dismissed from his mind.

The muck pile sloped ominously to the roof of the tunnel. Men clambered over its timber and boulder-studded sides like restless pygmies. Here, at the bottom of the pile was visible, the battered headlight of a truck slanting upward at a crazy angle between splintered timbering and muck.

### TRUCK UNDER PILE

On closer inspection, the radiator and crumpled fenders of a dump truck could be seen. It was virtually covered by the pile. It was under its body that the rescuers hoped Nichols might have found sanctuary.

At short intervals, above the thudding of metal against timber and the barked commands of Salo, came the irritating, rasping over tone of the truck horn. The heavy pressure of the dirt was apparently operating it like some giant hand. The noise unnerved the men on the first occasion and caused them to cease work momentarily.

Once as the timbering work progressed, there came the warning shout: "Look out?" The mountain was moving again. A few clods of dirt rumbled downward. Then the crew sprang back to work.

# DANGER SIGNS 'USUAL' IN BORE

TRIB D NOV 6 - 1936

Dangerous but passable. Use at your own risk!"

At least a score of times since the old Alameda-Contra Costa County tunnel was built 30 years ago, signs bearing that ominous warning have been posted at its west and east portals.

Yesterday one man was killed and two others injured in a 200-ton cave-in as some of the interminable repair work on the inter-county bore was being completed.

For years, the eastern portion of the 1050-foot bore has been rendered dangerous by the constant seepage of springs that has undermined and rotted the timbering.

The tunnel was completed in November, 1906, at a cost of approximately \$46,000. It is maintained jointly by the two counties. Of the total length, 614 feet lie in Contra Costa County.

At the time that the men were trapped, they were installing 23 new 10-foot "timber sets" to replace those that had been forced downward by the heavy over-pressure.

**Repairs have been undertaken at**

approximately one and two-year intervals ever since 1922. In that year the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors spoke of concreting the interior of the bore to "insure safety." Lack of funds prevented carrying out of the project.

As late as 1934, R. R. Arnold, Contra Costa County engineer, said: "The tunnel is more or less dangerous all the time and persons using it do so at their own risk." Contra Costa County officials issued a similar statement in 1926 after several slides.

**O**PENING of the new tunnel today beneath the Contra Costa hills recalls memories to many old residents of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties of the days when the old tunnel was first dedicated and opened to the horse and buggy travel of that decade. Most of those memories run to the sentimental, as is most frequently the case of bygone affairs, but there are some financial memories also. On the sentimental side, it is remembered that the old tunnel was not lighted for a number of years because power lines were too distant. It was not until the Sacramento Short Line extended wires to the tunnel, I am told, that lights were provided. Before that time the tunnel was an extended lovers lane shrouded in complete darkness, and couples riding in buggies walked their horses through the bore with about the same reaction that is now obtained at any resort where there is an "old mill stream" available at ten cents per ride. On the financial side of the question there is the story of the \$300 surplus left over from the public subscription raised to meet part of the expense of the project by the Merchants Exchange of Oakland. Wilbur Walker was the moving spirit of the organization in raising the fund, according to the stories told to me, but W. A. Knowles was the member who safeguarded the expenditures. Since the money was raised for a specific purpose, Knowles blocked any attempt to spend it for anything else with the result that for thirty years the \$300 rested in a trust fund and finally grew to \$900 before the directors could think of a proper manner in which to spend the money. Finally, by common consent, the money was used to purchase the plot of ground in front of the Oakland entrance to the tunnel and a flag pole was erected. The money was originally raised to help out the Contra Costa County portion of the tunnel expense, 600 feet of the 1000-foot bore being in that county.

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# *New Name Given to Old Tunnel Road*

Tunnel road today officially became Woodmere way. The name change followed a petition of the taxpayers of the district. The Berkeley city council yesterday voted to change the name. In the petition it was pointed out that the name "Tunnel road" gave people the impression that the street was a direct route to the new Broadway tunnel and that the heavy traffic which resulted hurt the property value in the district.

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# Tunnel Road's Name Restored

TRIB OCT 10 1939  
**Residents, Who Had It  
Renamed Woodmere  
Way, Change Minds**

BERKELEY, Oct. 10.—Woodmere Way, nee Tunnel Road, is Tunnel Road again.

Its original name was restored to it today by the City Council on petition of residents along the thoroughfare. The City Council made the change from Tunnel Road to Woodmere Way last April 6 on petition of the same residents.

And if that all sounds confusing, consider the postman, the man who has to prepare sample ballots for the forthcoming November 7 election, the residents themselves and all their friends.

As Tunnel Road, the street became too busy for the residents when the Broadway Low Level Tunnel opened. Cars used the street almost exclusively as the Berkeley approach to the tunnel. After a conference with State officials in Sacramento, the residents petitioned the council to change the name to Woodmere Way in the hope that it would fool motorists and they would take another street. But it didn't work.

So they petitioned again and today got the old name back. But a communication from the Claremont Improvement Club warned the council that there may be even a third name suggested.

# Cave-In Blocks

## Old Tunnel

TRIB ~~DA~~ APR 13 1948

A cavein in the old tunnel through the hills to Contra Costa County today completely blocked the ancient tube with rotted timbers and tons of soggy earth.

The tunnel, which was used only occasionally after the new Low Level Tunnel was bored through the hills, had been abandoned for several years. Barricades at both ends prevented motorists from using it as a short-cut.

The cavein today was just inside the Contra Costa portal, where springs have seeped for years, rotting the timbers and shoring, and permittin gthe weight of the earth to settle.

The old tunnel frequently was closed by slides before the Low Level bore was built, and once, in 1936, three men were caught in a cavein. Two were rescued, but the third died under the rubble.



# Old Tunnel Cost \$43,000 to Dig, Favorite of Buggy-Riding Swains

MAY 7 1952

A dark and damp tunnel running through the Oakland hills to Contra Costa County was opened in November, 1906, and gave Oaklanders their first practical application of the term "claustrophobia."

The 1050-foot tunnel, deemed necessary to link the Bay area to that great vacationland beyond the hills—Contra Costa—was built at a staggering cost of \$43,000, expensive because, after all, laborers were getting \$2 a day for their services after the turn of the century.

No one ever regretted building the old tunnel. Lovers for years to come spurred their horses up the winding road into the hills and slowed the horses through the long, dark ride inside.

## CROSS COUNTY LINE

And somewhere inside the buggy-riders crossed the county line from Alameda to Contra Costa County, because the tunnel lay 400 feet in Alameda and 600 feet in Contra Costa County.

It was truly a modern age when the hills could be spanned so easily, and people with means found it advantageous to buy property and build summer

homes in the old Oak Springs section of Orinda. They found themselves heading for the summer cottages way out there when they only had a scant week-end to spare.

Public support was such that funds were raised for part of the expense of the tunnel by the Merchants Exchange of Oakland. Wilbur Walker helped raise the money and W. A. Knowles safeguarded it. Left over was \$300, which remained untouched in a trust fund for 30 years until it was finally used to erect a flag pole on a purchased plot of ground in front of the Oakland entrance.

## NO REGRETS

No one ever regretted building the old tunnel, although for years it was dangerous and without lights until the Sacramento Short Line extended wires to the tunnel. During the early years, with power lines so far away, young swains and their ladies took the "tunnel ride" much as they now jump into floating boats at amusement parks for the ride along the "old mill stream."

When Oakland merchants,

spurred by Walker, who was executive secretary of the Merchants Exchange at the time, became interested in building a tunnel in 1901 and 1902, the Alameda County supervisors also became interested.

## SUPERVISORS ACT

The proposed tunnel site was not a part of Oakland proper so the supervisors moved to engage the interest of Contra Costa supervisors, and found very little interest.

Consequently, the merchants subscribed to sufficient funds to handle construction costs on the east side of the tunnel and building of it went ahead.

The firm of E. B. and A. L. Stone was awarded the contract with Alameda County Surveyor Edward Prather doing much of the survey work.

Safety precautions, not nearly as strict nor as rigidly enforced as at present, were, however, adequate enough to allow completion of the bore without a fatal accident.

## SEEPAGE TROUBLE

Through the years, however, considerable trouble was experienced with the bore of one-fifth mile running through damp earth. When seepage to the tunnel roof occurred with the rains of December, 1920, the bore was closed to truck and van traffic for a 10-day period while repairs were made.

Part of the beamed shoring was thought to be unsafe in 1922 and Contra Costa supervisors became convinced the entire bore should be "concreted," but the work was not done at the time because funds were not available.

On November 26, 1926, heavy mud slides fell on the highway at the east end of the tunnel, engulfing an auto but not injuring its occupants. With that, however, men were stationed at both entrances to the bore to warn autoists they must use the tunnel at their own risk.

## SUGGESTED DETOUR

The suggested detour to the Lafayette, Walnut Creek area was by the Franklin Canyon or the Dublin Canyon roads.

Many took the tunnel route anyway because, after all, more than a year before Contra Costa County Surveyor R. R. Arnold had warned motorists that the tunnel was "dangerous but passable" and nothing had ever happened. Arnold had warned in February, 1925, that seepage of water onto the timbers had caused considerable rot and weakening in the tunnel roof.

Repair work ordered spasmodically always resulted in the tunnel being declared in "good re-

pair" and in August, 1927, Oakland City Engineer George Randle said "the tunnel is quite safe."

"The fact that it is somewhat out of line need not alarm anybody," he said, admitting there was "some movement" to the posts which by 1927 stood on concrete flooring. In early 1929 Randle again issued a "safe" statement on the bore and announced that new lighting had given 400 per cent more illumination than the tunnel had had before.

By 1931 the new, twin-bore tunnel had been proposed and the State prompted maintenance of the old bore, but maintenance in the damp hill became an increasing problem.

March 10, 1934, three timbers fell, sprawling across the tunnel inside and City Engineer Walter Frickstad ordered the tunnel temporarily closed. Traffic was diverted via Fish Ranch Road.

## DON'T CARE MUCH

No one cared much. Construction of the new tunnel was imminent. A federal appropriation of about \$1,000,000 had already been made for the new bore which was to cost a total of \$3,752,000. The old tunnel was patched up by replacing a dozen "arches" in work that took two weeks.

With the new tunnel being built, repair work was going on "as usual" in the old bore on November 5, 1936, when suddenly "she came all at once," as the repair shift boss said later. Tons of earth cascaded down, trapping three men. Two of them were rescued but the third was killed. His body was recovered only after seven hours frantic digging.

## NEW BORE OPENED

The tunnel was re-opened but a year later, on December 5, 1937, at a much lower level, the new twin-bore opened with public fanfare.

Long since abandoned, with traffic using its flashy younger brother, the old tunnel caved in again on April 13, 1948, just inside the east portal. Underground springs seeping through again had caused rot in the timbers and shoring.

The greatest collapse, however, was probably the one to the old tunnel's prestige which occurred December 22, 1947.

An Oaklander, William E. Houser, of 5339 Broadway, appealed to the Contra Costa County supervisors for permission to grow mushrooms in the old tunnel. It would be a perfect cave, he said, ideal for their growth. The supervisors, on legal grounds, refused to grant the permission.



REES HEAL THE SCARS

# Nature Is Reclaiming Abandoned Tunnel Road

JUL 8 1955

Mother Nature is healing the scars man left behind when he abandoned the old Tunnel Road east of the Oakland-Contra Costa hills in favor of a new four-lane highway.

Although the old asphalt pavement is still in place in many spots beside the present highway, several vigorous young eucalyptus trees have pushed their way up through the four-to-six inches of black-top paving, where a white center line used to be.

The trees, up to 10 feet tall, forced their way through the unbroken pavement. Except for the space occupied by their trunks, there are no other nearby breaks in the road surface.

The road was abandoned in 1938, after the \$3,752,000 twin-bore Broadway tunnel replaced the sagging 1050-foot long bore high in the hills. The old tunnel, opened in 1906, cost \$43,000 to build.

The tunnel was part of an earlier way of life in the Bay Area. Travel through it was largely by horse and buggy until the gasoline combustion engine got brave enough to tackle the torturous switchbacks climbing the steep hill-sides.

Now automobiles by the thousands - per - hour rush

through the low-level span, which is itself overtaxed.

But all this has little to do with the struggle for survival being waged by the slim young saplings; they'll win it, and eventually erase another of man's feeble efforts to reshape the earth.